

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, November 14, 2006

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<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
*Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-8
Homelessness	9-14
*Welfare Reform	15-19
Vulnerable Adults	20-21
Domestic Violence	22-23
Adoption	24-26
Food Assistance	27-29
Utility Assistance	30-32
Poverty	33

*Important story at this spot

Mother loses her rights as a parent

Adopted daughters are no longer hers

BY RUBY L. BAILEY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

November 14, 2006

A Wayne County Family Court judge terminated the parental rights of a Detroit woman on Monday, saying she should have known her 2-year-old foster child was being abused before he was killed in her home.

Charlsie Adams-Rogers, 59, may appeal the ruling, which legally ended her rights to her adopted daughters -- a 12-year-old girl and a nearly 2-year-old girl-- her attorney, Marc Shreeman, said. Adams-Rogers' first name also appears incorrectly as Charlise on some court documents.

The girls were removed from the house Aug. 16, after Adams-Rogers' foster son, Isaac Lethbridge, was found dead of blunt force trauma in her westside home. The girls were placed in separate foster homes.

No criminal charges have been filed in connection with Isaac's death and the investigation is ongoing, Constance Slappey, the Detroit police officer investigating Isaac's death, testified Monday.

Adams-Rogers was home with as many as 11 other people when Isaac died. She previously had said that she didn't know how the boy died. At Monday's hearing, she did not testify and declined to speak to a reporter, referring questions to her attorney.



Isaac Lethbridge

"Isaac died in a house full of people and ironically no one knows what happened," Judge Sheila Ann Gibson said as she made her ruling. "Ms. Rogers failed Isaac."

The boy's parents, Matt and Jennifer Lethbridge, attended Monday's hearing.

"We're just happy that slowly, justice is being done," Matt Lethbridge said.

Shreeman argued that Adams-Rogers provided a loving home to Isaac, his 4-year-old sister and Adams-Rogers' other foster and adopted children. At a hearing in the case on Nov. 2, Shreeman told the court that the 12-year-old daughter accidentally caused fatal injuries to Isaac while playing with him. The girl did not testify.

"A terrible tragedy did occur in this home," Shreeman said Monday in his closing statement. "That tragedy in the heart of Ms. Rogers should be enough."

But lawyers representing the state Department of Human Services said Adams-Rogers neglected to properly supervise Isaac and called her home unfit.

Doctors testified that Isaac didn't have bruises prior to being in Adams-Rogers' care. When bruises were noticed by one doctor on Aug. 4, Adams-Rogers said another doctor told her he bruised easily.

Hope Bryant, a 16-year-old former foster child, earlier testified that the 12-year-old once admitted she hit Isaac with a remote control. Bryant said Adams-Rogers never hit them or other foster children.

Judge Gibson said, "Isaac should have been attached to the hip of Ms. Rogers" after bruises began appearing on the boy. "If something happened to Isaac, she should have known about it."

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The Detroit News

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

Wayne briefs

Detroit

Foster mother loses rights to adopted kids

The Detroit foster mother of Isaac Lethbridge, the 2-year-old boy who died in her home, lost the rights to her two adopted children Monday. Wayne County Juvenile Judge Sheila Gibson terminated Charlise Adams-Rogers' rights to China, 12, and Aija, 23 months, following the boy's August death. A lawyer for Adams-Rogers said he is appealing the ruling.

[Return to regular web page](#)



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November 14, 2006

Cops coerced foster mom, lawyer says

Attorney for woman accused in tot's death says police intimidated her during questioning.

Iveory Perkins / The Detroit News

PLYMOUTH -- The defense attorney for a foster mother accused of murdering a 2-year-old claims police taunted and intimidated her during interrogations until she gave conflicting accounts of the death.

After a preliminary hearing set for Monday was postponed until Dec. 11, the defense attorney for Carol A. Poole of Canton Township said prosecutors had no evidence that she intentionally harmed foster daughter Allison Newman before her death Sept. 22.

Mark Satawa disputed police reports that Poole, 40, gave different accounts of her foster daughter's death and blamed police tactics for any possible holes in her story.

"You can't take a woman in shock and overwhelmed by a situation and grill her, accuse her of injuring a child, and tell her that her story doesn't make sense," Satawa said. "There are a lot of people who would panic in that situation.

"My case is that this child was injured, but in a tragic accident."

Poole faces life in prison on accusations of felony murder, first-degree child abuse and involuntary manslaughter.

Prosecutors have said she told multiple versions of how the child was injured, including that she was swinging the toddler and that Allison accidentally hit her head.

Canton Police Sgt. Rick Pomorski denies any intimidation.

"The entire case was turned over to the prosecutor's office and they made a decision based on evidence submitted," Pomorski said.

"We got no indication that anything improper had taken place."

Prosecutors were supposed to lay out their evidence Monday in 35th District Court, but Judge John MacDonald adjourned the hearing because Washtenaw County coroners have yet to forward autopsy reports to both sides in the case.

In court, Poole briefly cried before her husband, Alan, motioned to her to keep her head up.

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[Return to regular web page](#)



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Sturgis man faces kidnapping charge

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

By Jack Baker

Special to the Gazette

A Sturgis man accused of abducting a 14-year-old girl on Halloween as she walked to school has been charged with kidnapping.

Luis Alberto-Ruiz Santana, 19, was arraigned in St. Joseph County District Court last week and is scheduled to be back in court Nov. 22 for a preliminary examination, at which a judge will determine whether enough evidence exists to send the case to trial.

Santana is accused of kidnapping Sulema Galvan-Munoz on Oct. 31. Sturgis Police said the girl made calls for help to family and friends from Santana's cellular phone. The two were found Nov. 1 in Huntington County, Ind., after investigators spotted the car Santana was driving outside a residence and found him and Sulema in the residence.

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[Print Page](#)

Meth charges for Marcellus mom

Monday, November 13, 2006 10:41 AM EST

CASSOPOLIS - A Marcellus woman, Crystal Lemarbe, 23, was arraigned Nov. 9 on charges of methamphetamine and marijuana possession and child endangerment.

Her bond was set at \$10,000 cash or surety.

She bonded out of the Cass County Jail on Thursday.

Two children remained in the custody of Family Court.

On Wednesday, Nov. 8, at 12:30 p.m., Cass County Drug Enforcement Team investigators, acting on citizen complaints of narcotics dealing from a residence on Jones Street in Marcellus, uncovered an inactive meth lab.

Investigators arrested the female resident of the home for possession of clandestine lab components and possession of methamphetamine and marijuana.

The children were turned over to the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), which began investigating their welfare.

Cass County Sheriff's Office deputies assisted with the investigation.

A hazardous materials company was called to the scene to clean up the laboratory materials.



Man held on porn charges

GRAND BLANC TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

By Ron Fonger, Kim Crawford and Bryn Mickle

JOURNAL STAFF WRITERS

GRAND BLANC TWP. - A registered sex offender who has made a career of taking photos of young male models is in jail on 22 criminal charges related to child pornography.

Robert C. Lamb, 50, who was convicted of sexually assaulting a teenager almost two decades ago, was arraigned on the new charges Thursday.

Lamb was arrested last week after Grand Blanc Township police alleged found child sexually abusive material during a search of his home. He is being held in the Genesee County Jail in lieu of cash bonds totaling \$440,000.

In their warrant, police said they went to Lamb's home in May as part of an investigation into a murder this year. Lamb was not charged in connection with the slaying, but the search of his house led to his new arrest.

In the four-page warrant prepared by the county prosecutor's office at the request of Grand Blanc Township police last week, Lamb is charged with one count of possession of child sexually abusive material, 11 counts of using a computer to commit crime and 10 counts of producing child pornography.

Though Lamb was convicted of a sex crime in 1988, that hasn't prevented him from earning a living working with young males. His photos of bare-chested boys are a mainstay on his Web site, where Lamb offers would-be photographers "one-on-one" modeling sessions with teens for \$525.

Township police and County Prosecutor David Leyton would not say if the charges are connected to Lamb's Web sites or his photography business.

But Lamb's father, Bill - once the most popular radio disc jockey in Flint - said Monday his son did nothing wrong. The elder Lamb, who hosted a radio show dedicated to workers at Buick City for 26 years, called the charges against his son "ridiculous" and "hogwash."

Bob Lamb operated his business from the basement of his father's home on Apple Creek Trail.

"I have an audio studio and he had a photo studio in the basement," Bill Lamb said. "He worked about 15 feet away from me. He wasn't doing anything illegal."

This is not the first time that Bob Lamb has come under police scrutiny.

He was arrested on charges of producing child pornography in 1986.

In that case, police said Lamb had sex with boys and videotaped young boys performing sex acts. One boy told police Lamb paid him about \$30 to pose naked and perform a sex act on videotape. The boy said Lamb promised the tape would be sent to New York, where it would be sold for upward of \$1,500, according to police reports.

Another boy told police a similar story but said the film would be sold in Florida or California.

An assistant county prosecutor at the time said Lamb created an "almost ingenious way of becoming in contact with young people" by managing baseball teams, taking pictures and approaching boys at fast-food restaurants, according to court files.

Lamb eventually pleaded guilty in 1988 to third-degree criminal sexual conduct involving a teenager between the ages of 13 and 15. He was sentenced to a year in jail and 5 years' probation.

He never served a day in prison because then-Circuit Judge Thomas C. Yeotis sentenced him to a combination of jail and probation. When a state appeals court ruled in 1992 that the law required Yeotis to give Lamb a prison sentence, the judge sentenced him to 6 months in prison. But because Lamb had already spent 292 days in the county jail, he wasn't required to actually serve the prison sentence.

Victim advocacy groups were outraged at the time by the sentence, but Yeotis defended his actions, saying that Lamb would have better hope for rehabilitation if he stayed in Genesee County, where he had family support.

When he was sentenced, Lamb said he was "offended" by the prosecution's charges and argued that they were never proved in court.

Lamb was ordered not to associate with anyone under 18, but he again began to work with boys and teens when his probation ended in 1993.

He produced "The American Boy, A Photographic Essay," a self-published 80-page paperback book last November that sells for \$29.87 and is available at Amazon.com.

Three years ago, Lamb registered the names of two businesses in Genesee County - American Teen Video Magazine and Intermedia Partners. The American Teen Web site lists Lamb as publisher and focuses on teen boy models and entertainment.

Lamb's self-named site features 15 teen boy models - each with linked Web sites - whom he has photographed, often bare-chested. CDs "packed with images" are sold for \$29.99. All of Lamb's models have ads appearing on the American Teen site.

Township police confirmed last year that they were aware Lamb was running a model and photography business that specialized in teenage boys, but they concluded some of his photos of young boys were suggestive but legal.

In August 2001 and March 2002, Mundy Township police received separate complaints about Lamb's recruitment of boy models, according to police reports.

In 2001, a woman told police that Lamb on three separate occasions approached her son at the Meijer store on Hill Road, where the boy worked.

Lamb left business cards with the boy, who was 17 but looked younger, his mother told police.

A Mundy Township police report said police talked to Lamb's old parole officer, who stated Lamb's previous approach had been to approach boys 13 to 15 years old and ask them to model for him.

In 2002, an employee at the Kessel's store on Fenton Road in Mundy Township also contacted police about Lamb "coming in the store and approaching young men to young boys and handing out a card stating that he is a photographer looking for models."

Lamb was arraigned Thursday before Mt. Morris District Judge Larry Stecco, who set a total cash bond of \$440,000 - \$20,000 on each count against him.

He faces a preliminary examination on the charges Nov. 21 in Central District Court in Flint.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Plan: Give people homes, not shelters

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

By Cedric Ricks

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A 10-year community action plan unveiled today seeks to reduce homelessness by creating more affordable housing in the Kalamazoo area.

In its first year, the plan would focus on implementing strategies to end homelessness rather than manage the problem, said representatives of the Affordable Housing Partnership, a coalition of housing, nonprofit and social-service officials.

That means providing short-term rental assistance rather than creating more shelter beds.

About 100 community members were expected to attend a presentation this morning by the housing partnership at the Fetzer Center on Western Michigan University's campus. Local Initiatives Support Corp., a national organization that helps revitalize communities, partnered with several local organizations to develop the plan. Funding remains uncertain.

The plan also calls for implementing strategies to prevent homelessness and improve the system that helps homeless people.

On any given night in Kalamazoo County, between 250 and 300 people stay in homeless shelters, officials said.

"When you manage homelessness, you create more shelter beds. You create a shelter-based system," said Ellen Kisinger-Rothi, executive director of Housing Resources Inc. in Kalamazoo.

"When you end homelessness, you find permanent, affordable housing for people and provide them with supports to be able to sustain it and/or transition from homelessness to independence."

Kisinger-Rothi and Ginger Hentz, program officer of LISC in Kalamazoo, met Monday with members of the Kalamazoo Gazette Editorial Board to outline the plan.

"Preventing homelessness in the first place, or rapidly re-housing those that become homeless, is much less costly than a long-term stay in an emergency shelter," Kisinger-Rothi said.

Key to the plan is funding from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, largely in the form of rental housing vouchers, Kisinger-Rothi said.

A housing voucher would help a recipient for up to two years, she said.

The Kalamazoo area is eligible for up to \$2 million in MSHDA funding, said Sally Harrison, director of supportive housing and homeless initiatives for MSHDA. Every county in the state has submitted a 10-year plan to be eligible for state funding earmarked to help four groups of homeless people: domestic-violence victims, youths, families with children, and single adults.

Harrison said \$14.5 million will be divided among eight Michigan regions. Kalamazoo County would be competing for funding in a region that includes Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, St. Joseph and Van Buren counties. It's possible for counties to collaborate and submit requests for funding jointly.

Requests for MSHDA funding must be submitted by Nov. 27. Applicants will be informed if they have

received funding by the second week of December, Harrison said, and applicants with local matching funding stand a better chance of getting the grants.

The city of Kalamazoo set aside \$250,000 in its 2005 budget to support a countywide housing trust fund, City Manager Ken Collard said. The Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners also has earmarked funds for a housing-voucher program in its 2007 budget. Kisinger-Rothi said officials will ask the county to use a portion of the funds it has set aside as part of the local match for the MSHDA program.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Ending homelessness in a decade

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

The Kalamazoo community has a 10-year plan to end homelessness. It starts today, during National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.

Local housing officials -- from governments and social service agencies to non-profits and foundations -- have put their heads together to develop the Local Initiatives Support Corp. Kalamazoo Affordable Housing Partnership. This is one of 80 communities in Michigan that has put together a plan.

Earlier this year, the Affordable Housing Partnership met with a focus group of some 200 people who either were homeless or had been homeless. The group emphasized the importance of getting homeless people into permanent housing immediately, not allowing them to languish in a series of shelters.

And that has become one of the first goals of the Affordable Housing Partnership: To apply for state grants that would allow the homeless to rent living space for up to two years while they get their financial lives in order.

The three other categories of the Affordable Housing Partnership are:

- Prevention: Helping people stay in their homes or apartments during difficult financial times to keep them from ever becoming homeless.
- Improving the efficiency of housing and homelessness programs.
- Changing the system into a more collaborative effort to help provide more stable housing for those who are precariously close to homelessness.

The demand for help for the homeless is expanding. In 2005, local shelters provided 97,500 nights of shelter. That's a 25 percent increase over demand in 2001.

The Affordable Housing Partnership estimates that 1,000 people are homeless in Kalamazoo County at any one time and that between 250 and 300 of them are filling local shelters.

Last night's "One Night Without a Home" sleepout in Bronson Park reminds us that homelessness is a very real problem.

We hope the Affordable Housing Partnership can show its plan is working. If, a year from now, there is reduced demand for emergency shelters, shorter stays, fewer employed people in shelters, then they'll know that plan is working.

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Published November 12, 2006

Nov. 10 to 19 puts spotlight on homelessness

CHARLOTTE — The Eaton County Board of Commissioners has joined Governor Granholm in declaring Nov. 10 to 19 as Homeless Awareness Week in Michigan.

In Eaton County, the local shelter has housed 227 adults and 280 children during the past 12 months. An additional 172 families were turned away for lack of space.

A federally mandated data collection system known as the Homeless Management Information System was implemented in Michigan this year, providing what the state believes is the first truly unduplicated count of the homeless. Agencies working with the homeless are required to enter information about every person served into a central data bank. Recently-released statistics from that system put the number of homeless people in Michigan during the first six months of this year at more than 50,000.

The Eaton County Continuum of Care, a coalition of agencies from our area that provide services to the homeless, is sponsoring a Resource Fair from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Nov. 17 as part of their Homeless Awareness Week activities.

The event will highlight local programs available to help people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Resource Fair will be held at the Eaton Area Senior Center, 804 S. Cochran, Charlotte. All are welcome to attend.

— *From SIREN/Eaton Shelter.*

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[\[Back\]](#)



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Housing's cold, hard reality High cost of housing keeps many homeless, advocates say

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

By Kathy Jessup

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Even a home fashioned from a cardboard box lined with newspapers can be expensive for some.

The roughly 70 people who gathered under the street lights of Bronson Park on Monday night to advocate for additional affordable housing here have something more substantial than corrugated paper shelters in mind. But the fact that the Kalamazoo Homeless Action Network had to pay \$12 to purchase boxes to provide makeshift housing for some of the 20 people who slept in the park Monday was prophetic.

The cost to house an estimated 1,000 Kalamazoo County people, including families with children, who currently have no permanent homes, could be substantial.

LoriAnne Tennison, of Kalamazoo, an associate organizer for the Michigan Homeless Action Network, spent Monday night in a tent that used to be her home. But since her employment with MHAN, she said, she's able to rent a room that she shares with several others.

She gave the tent to another homeless person, but shared it on Monday.

"I've slept in a box. The box is warmer," Tennison said as she explained how duct tape, scavenged newspapers and plastic can fashion a home. "The main thing is getting yourself up off the ground."

KHAN members at Monday night's national Homeless Awareness Week kickoff here said they're encouraged by Kalamazoo County's announced intention to offer a match for \$250,000 the city of Kalamazoo has had on hold for creation of an affordable-housing trust here. KHAN officials say using the local money to leverage state housing grants could result in some new, low-income rental units becoming available in the next few months, with a long-range goal of 100-125 units.

Anna Smith, 40, a Kalamazoo woman who says she's been homeless off and on since 1993, receives disability income. But the woman, who has epilepsy, says that won't cover the \$900 she said she needs for the security deposit and first month's rent for an apartment. She currently "sofa surfs," staying with different friends, sleeping on their couches and floors.

The shelter she'd constructed for Monday's park sleepover showed she's had experience outdoors.

"I've got a tarp and a single sleeping bag I borrowed from a friend and I've got a piece of drywall and some cardboard between me and the ground to stay warmer," said Smith, who was dressed in layers of sweatpants and a shirt, a fleecy robe and a puffy, oversized jacket.

Smith says she and her homeless friends are not without job skills. But she says lack of a permanent address keeps them from being considered for jobs as construction workers, landscapers, factory laborers or restaurant help.

"I don't agree that we don't want to work," Smith said. "Some people may choose that life, but a lot of us aren't into drugs or committing crimes, and we want to play by the rules. But you gotta have an address to get a job, and if you use the address at the (Kalamazoo Gospel) Mission, you're not going to get hired."

Ericka Parkinson, associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Richland, was among a handful of area church representatives who came to the opening prayer vigil. And Leah DuBuc, a Western Michigan

University senior social-work major, was one of a dozen college students who traded dorm rooms and apartments for the ground at Bronson Park on Monday.

As Tennison prepared her tent Monday night, she said she was thankful she'll return to her rented room tonight.

"It's a blessing," she said. "I'm not sure I could live through this again. You can easily be poor and happy if you can live in basic dignity."

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FEATURE: WELFARE

WELFARE WORKOUT

The feds thought the states were gaming welfare reform. Now states have to deal with a new round of rules.

By Ellen Perlman

After cutting its welfare caseload in half over the past decade, California thought it deserved a pat on the back: Its welfare agency was moving people off the rolls and getting them to participate in work activities.

The federal government agreed. Until last year. That's when the U.S. Congress narrowed the interpretation of what constitutes work and what are bona fide work activities. Under the new criteria, California is out of compliance and a failure. "All of our past successes have been wiped out," says Charr Lee Metsker, deputy director of the Welfare to Work Division at California's Department of Social Services.

The stringent new rules have reset the clock so that caseload reduction since the original 1996 welfare-to-work law no longer counts. States must increase the share of their caseloads that participate in work or work-related activities. Although California currently has more than 60,000 of its welfare caseload making their way to and through acceptable work activities, it must find a way to double that total. That means both increasing the number of hours that people work and getting others into some work activity. "That's going to make it a real stretch for us," Metsker says.

When it comes to meeting new welfare work requirements, some states see a molehill but most, like California, see a mountain. Under the new rules, which took effect on October 1, 50 percent of one-parent families on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families must be working or in work-related programs; 90 percent of two-parent TANF families must meet that criteria. If states fail to achieve this goal, they could experience a steep financial penalty: cuts in their federal block grant allocation of as much as 5 percent next year, 2 percent above that penalty the following year and an additional 2 percent the year after that if they're still not in compliance. For California, that would come to a \$187 million bite out of its 2007 block grant. Moreover, the state might be required to spend another \$180 million out of state funds due to a second penalty assessment on what is known as "maintenance of effort" money.

Some states are in better shape. About a dozen meet the 50 percent goal. But the federal crackdown flipped the fortunes of many in an instant. The majority of states are like California: They are no longer deemed to be meeting caseload requirements, even though many of them did so under the old rules. Nearly a dozen states must increase the work participation of their welfare recipients by 100 percent or more. In Pennsylvania and Oregon, it's more than 200 percent.

A DEFINING MOMENT

Work participation doesn't necessarily mean a 9-to-5 job. It also can include job training, education and counseling. And therein lies the rub--and the creative use of flexibility.

The 1996 welfare reform bill set 12 categories for what is considered work, ranging from on-the-job training to vocational education to community-service programs. Welfare agencies had some leeway in how they defined work-related activities or assigned those activities to categories. Some took that leeway too far, in the eyes of many at the federal level. A 2005 Government Accountability Office review of 10 states found, for instance, that five counted caring for a disabled family member as community service. Six placed substance-abuse treatment in the category of job search/job readiness, work experience or community service, and two put counseling for domestic violence in

those categories as well.

But those definitions weren't as troubling as some others. The study also reported that a few states allowed activities such as massage, personal journaling and smoking cessation to be counted in the category of job search/job readiness. GAO called it a "very broad definition," and some in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services viewed it as a method of gaming the system. "None of those are bad things," says Wade Horn, assistant secretary for Children and Families at HHS, referring to massage and other activities. "It's just that most Americans don't consider those activities work." When Congress revisited the welfare law, it asked HHS officials to specify what could be counted in those 12 categories. Massage and personal journaling didn't make the list.

States don't deny they might have played a little fast and loose with the categories but say it was for the good of clients. The welfare rules don't have a logical category for many activities, such as having to care for a disabled child, so they found a category to put them into in order to complete the federal forms.

The new congressional rules about categories severely curtails the time allowed for core activities essential to getting and keeping a job. That's because activities such as education and training, searching for a job or undergoing substance-abuse treatment are usually placed in the job-readiness category. Under that category, recipients in one of its activities are limited to a maximum of six weeks total and no more than four weeks consecutively.

States consider that limit to be counter-productive. Welfare workers could push people who aren't ready into jobs, but these caseworkers say they know from experience that the clients will just end up back on welfare.

States and welfare advocates say the federal decision to clamp down on the program is going to make things worse, not better. "It's tightening the screws with the attitude that what's been going on in the states has been a game, that they haven't been serious with this," says Evelyn Ganzglass, director of workforce development for the Center for Law and Social Policy, a non-profit advocacy organization.

And the new rules may have unintended consequences. States may keep working welfare recipients on the rolls just to be able to make the numbers fit the federal formula, says Elaine Ryan, a deputy executive director at the American Public Services Association, a nonprofit, bipartisan organization. Or states may have to come up with community-service jobs to get people into a workplace. But most welfare workers agree that those aren't stepping stones to legitimate and well-paying jobs, and doing community service may take time away from needed treatment or education.

Horn at HHS doesn't disagree with these assessments. But there's not a whole lot he or anyone else at HHS can do about it. The agency was given the task of clarifying work rules based on the original 1996 statute. "I don't have the authority to say, 'I don't like that law,'" Horn says. "I can't by fiat change the statute."

DATA POTHLES

The new interim rules will entail a good deal more administrative work--for welfare supervisors as well as recipients. The rules require, for example, a work-verification system that can provide an audit trail of daily activities. So, recipients enrolled in a community college course might have to get the professor to sign a paper every day to prove they attended class. The problem, state workers say, is that that "outs" them as welfare recipients, creating a stigma that isn't necessary or fair and may keep clients from continuing at school.

Horn doesn't see a problem with the daily reporting. "Why wouldn't you want someone to know what a person on a time-limited benefit program is doing on a daily basis in preparing for work and working?" he asks. "You don't want to find out after six months that someone never went to class."

In developing verification systems, states have "enormous

flexibility," Horn adds. "The amazing thing is why this is controversial at all. Would it be good for Medicaid to say, 'Whatever doctor bill comes in, we don't care what procedure was done, we'll just pay it?'"

His comparison of welfare rules under TANF with the Medicaid program raises an interesting issue. Unlike Medicaid, the TANF block grant program is not an entitlement program that is vulnerable to ballooning costs depending on the size of the caseload or misuse of the money. The block grants are capped, and funding has stayed the same since TANF's inception in 1996--thereby losing value every year, Ryan points out. That being the case, she doesn't understand the federal government's sudden heavy hand. "This kind of federal micromanagement," she says, "is really absurd after a decade of real success in being able to achieve a 60 percent reduction in welfare."

Particularly onerous is the two-parent rule that requires 90 percent of two-parent families to work a minimum of 35 hours per week or 55 hours if they receive federal or state child care assistance. No state has ever been able to achieve this, except Montana, which did so for one year, according to Ryan. HHS's Horn agrees that the 90 percent rate is "pretty much unattainable." He says the Bush administration proposed to do away with it, but that's not what came out of Congress. To avoid the hefty penalties of non-compliance, states may have to remove two-parent families from the welfare rolls and pay for them with state funds.

The one-parent family caseload has to meet a 50 percent work-participation rate. On that point, according to states' 2004 data, at least 58 percent of welfare recipients "did not do one hour of any activity countable under the law," Horn says.

That comment irritates state welfare workers who feel those numbers don't reflect reality. Knowing they wouldn't count for anything, many states didn't bother to report the activities of those who didn't meet the 30-hour work-participation standard. If someone worked 28 hours, notes Robin Arnold-Williams, secretary of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, those hours didn't get put in the federal reporting data at all.

The federal data collection is designed to ask whether states are meeting the federal requirements, not what welfare recipients are actually doing, says Elizabeth Lower-Basch, senior policy analyst with the Law and Social Policy Center and a former HHS employee. In some cases, people are working but not the required hours. In other cases, they're in substance-abuse treatment but there's no place on the form that says, "other," where they can stick that in. "Some states routinely reported what they had," she says. "Other states said if someone's only participating a few hours a week, don't worry about entering it into the system. In hindsight, that was a mistake given the way the data was used."

LOOKING AHEAD

The rules are the rules and states are coming up with ways to abide by them. California, one of about a dozen with a state-supervised, county-run welfare program, has asked counties to analyze their welfare populations and come up with strategies for how to work with welfare families. The state has developed a performance-incentive program with a pool of \$40 million available for counties that do a good job of getting people employed or into work activities. The incentive money also applies to county agencies that get people into jobs that pay better-than-average wages. "We're trying to encourage counties to look at how to get folks into the next job and the next job, on an upward mobility path," Metsker says.

The counties also will share the pain. If California ultimately is slapped with a financial penalty for not meeting work participation rates, it will pass on half of the penalty to those counties that contributed to its failure.

Michigan needs to increase work participation by 117 percent to keep its \$775 million in block-grant money. That means putting an additional 7,000 welfare recipients into work activities. Three years

ago Michigan began implementing a new jobs, education and training program, known as JET. The welfare agency is working with clients to develop self-sufficiency plans and is trying to deal with the underlying reasons why families are on welfare. One major cause: About 50 percent of clients are functionally illiterate.

The JET program was rolled out a few weeks ago in four counties where about half the welfare recipients live. A work incentive bonus for clients will give them \$10 per month and transitional Medicaid coverage for 90 days after they land a job, in an effort to keep them in the workforce. "Too many people lose benefits when they start working," says Marianne Udow, director of Michigan's human services department, noting that the need for those benefits often pushes them back on the rolls. "Fifty percent of those who get a job today recycle back to our caseload," she says.

Pennsylvania, too, has the arduous job ahead of placing nearly 23,000 people into work activities, a 220 percent increase over the current number. In the past decade, the state had reduced caseloads by 54 percent. That success was due to "good old-fashioned face-to-face contact," says Ted Dallas, executive deputy secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare.

Now that Pennsylvania is marked as a low-performing state, the state welfare agency plans to change how it works with contractors who provide employment and training programs. More contracts will be performance-based and fewer based on a system of reimbursing costs. Performance means clients getting and keeping a job. One of the benchmarks will be retaining that job for at least six months. "It's not enough to enroll in a program or get a job for a day," says M.L. Wernecke, policy director at the welfare agency. The governor also put \$31 million in his budget for child care and support services that bolster job retention among welfare recipients.

Although the rules make the job much tougher, Dallas is confident Pennsylvania will meet the goal the federal government has set. He would have preferred that the new rules focus on education and support for some of the realities states face, such as clients with long-term substance-abuse problems. Six weeks is not enough to deal with those issues, he believes. "We lobbied for a different change, with more emphasis and value on education," Dallas says. "We're working within the constraints."

In the end, the state and the federal government want the same thing: improved performance in the system for getting welfare recipients into jobs. "We're adapting to changes in the rules of the game," Dallas says, "but the goal is always the same."

ON THE JOB

Increase in work participation needed for states to meet new TANF regulations*

NO INCREASE NEEDED

- Alaska
- Florida
- Georgia
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Montana
- Nevada
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- South Dakota
- Texas
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming

LESS THAN 50 PERCENT INCREASE NEEDED

Alabama
 Arizona
 Arkansas
 Connecticut
 Illinois
 Iowa
 Massachusetts
 Minnesota
 New Jersey
 New Mexico
 New York
 North Carolina
 North Dakota
 South Carolina
 Utah
 Washington

INCREASE OF 50 PERCENT TO 99 PERCENT NEEDED

Colorado
 Maine
 Mississippi
 Missouri
 Nebraska
 New Hampshire
 Tennessee
 Vermont
 Virginia
 West Virginia

INCREASE OF 100 PERCENT OR GREATER NEEDED

California
 Delaware
 Indiana
 Maryland
 Michigan
 Oregon
 Pennsylvania
 Rhode Island

*The National Conference of State Legislatures has compiled data on required increases in work participation that differs somewhat from this information. The NCSL data is available on the Web at <http://www.ncsl.org/statefed/welfare/workpart.htm>

Source: Administration of Children & Families

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Notebook: Looking At Elder Care

Nov. 13, 2006

(CBS) Like many of you, I came to assisted living suddenly and unexpectedly — when my mother-in-law suffered a serious stroke. Without warning our family was thrust into the world of elder-care attorneys and residential care. I sat in on meetings as my father-in-law was pitched about the quality of this facility or that, sifted through brochures featuring special "Memory Neighborhoods" for those in the early stages of Alzheimer's and cringed when it became clear what the out-of-pocket costs would run every month.

So it's safe to say I brought a bit of personal history to our "Aging in the Shadows" investigation and the questions we raised about the industry. Questions like: Why no federal regulation? Why are state laws all over the map? Why is there not even a single uniform *name* for these facilities? Why are they called "Assisted Living" in 41 states, "Homes for the Aged" in Michigan, "Personal Care Homes" in Georgia, "Boarding Homes" in Washington, "Community-Based Residential Facilities" in Wisconsin and "Residential Care Facility for the Elderly" in California?

By definition, "Assisted Living" generally means 24-hour supervised personal care facilities, a place where residents get three meals a day and a range of services from bathing to dressing to laundry. These facilities also provide medication and health management, social services, recreational activities, transportation and housekeeping. For the most part, it's private pay — costing residents an average of \$2,000 a month (but as much as \$6,000 in some cases).

Nursing homes, by comparison, are for seniors who are sick and need constant medical attention. Unlike assisted living facilities, they require a nursing staff, are federally regulated and accept Medicaid or Medicare.



CBS News Investigates: Aging In The Shadows
Elder Abuse Resources

Despite my mother-in-law's fine experience, I knew little of these differences when I started my reporting, before I traveled to Michigan to interview Dennis Camarata, his wife, Mary, and his sister Trish, as they relived the horrific death of Mike Camarata.

It was Mike Camarata who loaned Dennis and Mary the money to open their first restaurant. A former ironworker, Mike was a tough guy who softened later in life. At the age of 83 and turned almost childlike by dementia, he was living in a Home for the Aged outside Detroit.

"He was very sweet, he was very kind, he thought of me as his girlfriend," said Mary. "He loved to hug."

"It was a complete open plan," said Dennis of the facility in Ann Arbor, Mich., where the family eventually placed his dad. "The kitchen was open. The dining room was open. Pretty much everything was open."

So it was on April 9, 2004, that Mike Camarata was wandering around the kitchen and opened what in his mind he thought was the refrigerator and drank from what he thought was a jug of orange juice. Only it wasn't a refrigerator. It was an *unlocked* kitchen cabinet. And it wasn't orange juice. It was a toxic dishwashing detergent containing sodium hydroxide ... better known as lye.

"We were told by the doctor that this particular chemical was 50 or 100 percent stronger than Drano," said Mary.

"Stronger than Drano?" I said.

"Yes," said Mary.

"Never was in a million years was I ever prepared for what I walked in and saw at the hospital," recalled Trish, tears in her eyes. "He turned around he looked at me: His mouth was all swollen, his face was all swollen, he was trying to cough — and what can I do?"

It took Mike Camarata four terrible days to die.

"It was hard to watch my father pull his stomach and his throat out through his mouth," said Dennis. "It was just horrific. He died a horrific death."

In February of this year, the Camarata family settled a lawsuit against the facility and cleaning supplier, one of more than two dozen negligence cases filed by attorney Jules Olsman.

"A different name for the assisted living business could be risky business," said Olsman. "They market not just to the people who are going to use the services, the senior citizens, but to the children of these people who feel much better saying, 'Oh, my father is in assisted living and not a nursing home.'"

Without question, there are many assisted living facilities across the country in which residents *are* treated with the kind of tender loving care highlighted in brochures and advertisements. But given the most unscientific sampling of people we spoke to about this story — some of the 78 million Baby Boomers whose parents will eventually need help or, odds are, they themselves one day — there is an appalling lack of knowledge about the assisted living industry in this country.

You might be surprised to know that there are now more than 36,000 assisted living facilities in this country — up 33 percent since 2000.

Industry leader Sunrise Senior Living Inc. boasts more than 400 facilities in the United States and Canada alone — and \$126 million in earnings in 2005. Given those kind of numbers, I was also surprised to find that assisted living facilities are *not* subject to any kind of federal regulations — and surprised to discover how widely state laws vary from state to state.

In Minnesota, for example, there are no staff requirements whatsoever. In New Mexico, a caregiver just needs to be over 18 and pass a basic background check. Only about 30 states require first aid and CPR certification; just 24 mandate that a nurse must be on staff. And only one state — Alabama — insists that the medical director must also be a physician.

Paul Williams is the director of public policy for the Assisted Living Federation of America (ALFA). His trade association has steadfastly resisted federal regulation. The main reason, he said, is because it "kills innovation."

In addition, according to Williams and the ALFA, the existing system works because every state gets to determine "its own best way to ensure seniors are protected from abuse and receive optimal care." Moreover, the ALFA says member companies follow strict internal processes to "ensure that each community far exceeds the regulations in the states in which they operate."

"The states have done a great job of devising regulations," said Williams. "By and large across the country, consumers have been very satisfied with the care that's been delivered by our caregivers."

That's really hard to tell because nobody we talked to can get a real handle on how many lawsuits have been filed against facilities — mainly because there's no central database. The sense, however, is they've mirrored the growth of the industry. Some states, like Michigan, have suffered from governors and legislatures who believed the industry was better served by self-government. Under former Republican Gov. John Engler, staff inspectors in Michigan's Department of Human Services dropped from a high of 80 in 2000 for 4,439 facilities to 46 inspectors in 2006 for 4,617 facilities — a ratio of less than 1 inspector per 100 facilities.

In the case of Mike Camarata's senseless death, the facility in question was never fined or sanctioned. The state's only response was a letter asking if "a corrective action plan" had been implemented.

"Pretty sad, isn't it," says Dennis Camarata.

Marianne Udow, the woman in charge of Homes for the Aged in Michigan, is now fighting back, pushing for tougher laws and more inspectors. A stronger Democratic voice in the newly elected state legislature will help Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm increase the pressure. So would a stronger public voice.

So what can you do? According to Udow and many other elder-care experts, the No. 1 thing is ... your homework. Don't blindly believe brochures and video presentations. Go online to check out the regulations in your state regarding licensing, training and staffing, to see if the facility you're interested in has been cited by the state for violations before making a decision. Don't be afraid to ask how many hours of training are provided for caregivers, and what form that training takes.

And, if at all possible, take an active role in monitoring the care of your loved one. When it comes to "assisted" living, that may well be the greatest assist you can give.

By Armen Keteyian. ©MMVI, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.

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Ex-Walberg aide could face stiffer penalty

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

By Susan J. Demas

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Depending on a judge's ruling, a former Republican congressional campaign official could spend two years in prison.

An Eaton County prosecutor filed a motion Monday in District Court to throw out a plea deal reached with Daniel A. Coons, 30, of Eaton Rapids.

Coons resigned Oct. 25 from the staff of U.S. Rep.-elect Tim Walberg, R-Tipton, after the Citizen Patriot reported Coons pleaded guilty Sept. 18 to domestic violence. Coons admitted he struck his 9-year-old foster child in the face, a police report shows.

Monday, Judge Julie H. Reincke was to sentence Coons for the misdemeanor punishable by up to 93 days in jail or a \$500 fine. Instead, Assistant Prosecutor Kelly Grundwald said the "information provided upon which the plea agreement was reached was not correct."

Reincke will decide Dec. 7 whether to toss out the plea agreement. If she does, Coons will face a third-degree child abuse charge, a high misdemeanor that could carry a two-year prison sentence.

Coons faces disciplinary action from the Department of Human Services' Placing Agency. The Foster Care Review Board said Coons' two foster children should be returned to him.

A hearing is scheduled for Nov. 21 in Eaton County Probate Court.

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Man jailed after a bad hair day

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

By Scott Hagen

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A man asked his girlfriend to cut his hair and later beat her because he was unhappy with the result, police said.

The couple were at home in the 100 block of Sherman Street in the village of Brooklyn on Friday. The 27-year-old woman told police her boyfriend, 21, asked her to give him a haircut about 3 p.m. She did.

The boyfriend, unhappy with the way his hair looked, started punching her and choking her, said Columbia Township Police Chief David Elwell.

The boyfriend fled after the woman called police. Columbia Township Officer Scott MaComber returned to the house about 10 p.m.

He heard the woman inside the house screaming, "Help, he's trying to kill me," Elwell said.

The woman told police the boyfriend assaulted her again by choking her while she was taking a shower and also broke her eyeglasses, Elwell said. She had redness around the neck, but refused medical treatment.

The suspect was arrested and taken to the Jackson County Jail. Police said both the woman and the man had been drinking before the alleged incident occurred.

The man is facing charges of domestic assault, second offense. The man was arraigned in District Court on Monday and entered a plea of not guilty.

He is scheduled to appear in District Judge Darryl Mazur's court Nov. 20 for his preliminary examination.

He remains in jail on a \$5,000 bond.

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November is National Adoption Month

Need for more families to adopt grows



By Bisi Onile-Ere

MID MICHIGAN (WJRT) - (11/13/06)--November is National Adoption Month, and this year's theme is "Answering the Call." So many have done it, but there is a growing need for more to do the same.

Hollywood superstars Angelina Jolie and Madonna have brought international adoptions to the forefront with the newest additions to their family.

But this month, the focus is on a similar issue, but instead it's on the home front.

"We have children in the United States that can use a loving home," said Sheryl Thompson with the Department of Human Services.

In Mid Michigan there are nearly 600 children in foster care and up for adoption. More than half are those who social workers say are the most difficult to place with a family: minority children and teenagers.

"A lot of people associate if the child has been in foster care, it's something the child did," said the Department of Human Services' Chris Muxlow. "It's really nothing the child did. It's because of the parents."

And according to the Michigan Department of Human Services, it's the children that are left hoping to piece together all that has fallen apart. Sometimes family is found with relatives or complete strangers.

The need is there, but the issue is finding those who want to adopt.

"It's alarming when you think about the number of kids without a family," Thompson said.

"The goal of the Department of Human Services is to move a child who has become available for adoption into a permanent place as soon as possible," Muxlow said.

You can see the ABC12 report by clicking on the video icon above. You will need Windows Media Player to view this video. You can get it FREE by clicking here. NOTE: Video clips will only be available for 7-days from the date they were created. ALSO: Video clips may play in a separate window, without audio, on Mac OS X machines. abc12.com is aware of this issue and is working with the video player vendor to correct it as soon as possible. Copyright 2006 ABC Inc., WJRT-TV Inc.

Posted on Mon, Nov. 13, 2006

ADOPTION

All kids need love, family, friends and roots

BY LESLEY MITCHELL JONES
lesleyjones@bellsouth.net

November is National Adoption Month. Unless you are an adoptive parent or are contemplating adopting a child, this milestone month will likely just be devoted to preparation for the holidays.

However, it is at this time every year that I, a foster parent who became an adoptive parent, join with all other parents who have adopted children to reflect on a decision that changed our lives and the lives of the children we have come to love so much.

Each of us has our own story about adopting a child, the good and the bad, the triumphs and the missteps, but most of all we share an experience that we wouldn't trade for anything in the world. My experience as a foster parent led to the adoption of a beautiful little girl who today is a focused, thriving teenager.

There is a tremendous need for adoptive and foster parents in our community. Kids In Distress, a leading force and authority in the treatment of abused and neglected children and their families in South Florida, inspired me as a volunteer to become involved and eventually to become a foster and then adoptive parent. According to Kids In Distress in Broward and Palm Beach County, two and a half potential foster families are needed for every child.

The key is matching the right parent with the right child to avoid placement failures. The children are emotionally, physically and psychologically abused.

That's where loving, patient, supportive foster and adoptive parents can step in to make a difference in the life of that child. Being an adoptive and foster parent is not easy, but parenting is not easy.

The experience starts with an adjustment period. But as time goes on, foster children and those who go on to be adopted start to carry on as they always have based on the environment they came from. Remember, they trust and believe no one. But they are so ready to love, that it hurts to watch the anguish in their eyes.

How did these children even get to this point? You see the stories every day in the newspaper and on television about the abused and neglected children in our community, many of whom die at the hands of their parents. Because we don't know them personally and the issue probably doesn't impact our lives in any way, we might just admit how sad the situation is and move on.

Studies show that prevention and early intervention are the answer. Abuse and neglect not only cost our society in terms of the trauma caused, but also economically. In a heralded study by the state of Michigan, the cost of child abuse was estimated at more than \$800 million annually, which includes the costs associated with low birth weight babies, infant mortality, special education, protective service, foster care, juvenile and adult criminality and psychological services.

Compare that with the costs associated with a prevention program, which are estimated at approximately \$40 million annually. That's an astounding 19-to-one cost advantage for prevention.

So keeping the family together is the obvious first choice. But when reunification with the biological family is not in the best interest of the child, it is necessary to find a loving, stable relative or a foster or adoptive family where these children will succeed and grow.

Becoming an adoptive or foster parent is no doubt scary. However, we live in a wonderful community filled with local agencies, such as Kids In Distress, that have the resources to provide family, mental-health, life skills and parenting education support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Kids need love, family, friends and roots. Please look into adoption and share your life, particularly during this important month.

Lesley Mitchell Jones is an adoptive parent, a member and immediate past chairman of the Board of Directors of Kids In Distress of Broward and Palm Beach County.

[Return to regular web page](#)



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**
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November 14, 2006

A child is waiting

Big-hearted James is waiting for you

Rosemary Dorr / Special to The Detroit News

Nine-year-old James has two special goals. "I want to be a preacher," he says. "I like going to church." James also wants to be "a good kid."

James, even after years of disappointment and disruption, "has a beautiful heart," reports his foster care worker. "He's intelligent. He's lovable. He interacts appropriately with adults and is respectful, if he's not upset."

"He's a sweet child," notes his foster mother of nearly two months. "He listens well. Obeys good. He's very clean, too. He's a little angel to me."

She's his hero, declares James. "She treats us nice. I like going places with her."

A fourth-grader, James thinks "school is easy, at least math is." He likes "doing homework, watching TV cartoons, roller skating, playing outside and running."

He doesn't like to sing or dance, but adds with a grin, "I like to go to sleep."

He'd like a permanent family, of course.

"James needs somebody with a lot of patience who can understand what he has gone through in the past and why he has difficulty listening to authority figures," says his adoption worker.

He's working on this, though. James emphasizes, "I listen."

If you might consider adoption, please talk with Jamila Sudduth at Evergreen Children's Services, (313) 862-1000, ext. 161.

Last column's children: Brothers Christian, 10, and 9-year-old Jerrimee are good buddies with charm and some special needs. For information, call Dolores Guerra at Orchards Children's Services, (248) 593-1545.

A Child is Waiting appears Tuesdays in Features.

[Return to regular web page](#)



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published November 14, 2006

TOUGH TIMES: Food banks, soup kitchens see increase in needy

More first timers seeking meals, some groups say

By Melissa Domsic
Lansing State Journal

As he ate a piece of cake Monday afternoon at a local soup kitchen, Douglas Shroyer acknowledged he's seen more people coming in for food in the past few years.

It's the economy, said the Lansing man, who has been a member of the church at the Capital Area Salvation Army for 27 years.

With one in four Lansing residents living in poverty, according to the U.S. Census, local food banks and soup kitchens have reported increases in clients as they begin holiday drives. Others are seeing more first-time visitors.

"This year, it's gotten worse than it's ever been," said Sharon Miller of Our Savior Lutheran Food Bank in Lansing.

"(It's the) working poor, people who have had jobs for years and suddenly the place just closes, and they've got nothing."



(Photo by BECKY SHINK/Lansing State Journal)
Rewarding: "I love doing (volunteering) here," said Lynn Bauder, 75, as she readies food for people about to receive lunch Monday at the Salvation Army Community Kitchen. "It's fun," said Bauder, who has been a volunteer in the kitchen for 10 years. "It's a privilege."

How to help

Here is a list of charitable groups offering help for mid-Michigan's needy:

- American Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center, 2116 Mint Road, 702-3358
- Greater Lansing Food Bank, 887-4307
- City Rescue Mission of Lansing, 607 E. Michigan Ave., 485-0145
- Ingham County Food Bank, 5303 S. Cedar St., 887-4452
- Capital Area Salvation Army, 525 N. Pennsylvania Ave., 482-9715
- The Open Door Ministry of Downtown Lansing, 215 N. Capitol Ave., 485-9477
- Our Savior Lutheran Food Bank, 1601 W. Holmes Road, 882-7750

Michigan's economy has been among the worst in America this past year as the state sheds manufacturing jobs, forcing many to go without.

About half the people who go to Our Savior food pantry are children, Miller said.

"Times are terrible out there, I think more so than people realize," she said.

Hunger is a difficult thing to identify, said Jane Marshall, executive director of the Food Bank Council of Michigan.

"People don't realize what the issue is, and that's one of the reasons we continue to have hunger," she said.

When people go hungry, it hurts more than just their stomachs.

"They're compromised, and they're unproductive in the workplace, and they're not learning what they can," she said. "It's a quality of life issue, and it's a health issue."

Donors struggling, too

Although there are more food drives during the holidays, some recent drives have yielded less food than normal, said Kathe DeMara, operations supervisor for the American Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center in Lansing.

"People are struggling to make ends meet themselves, and there's not a lot left to give," she said.

While donations are down or stagnant at some local charities, the Capital Area Salvation Army has seen an increase.

The organization's new leadership has done a good job getting the word out to donors, said Chuck Calati, director of community programs for the group.

The Open Door Ministry of downtown Lansing hasn't seen an increase in donations, but it does have plenty of volunteers, Director Cris Bobier said.

Volunteers sought

But a few miles away, the Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center is desperate for volunteers, DeMara said. The distribution center needs help processing donations, and other charity organizers said the public can help by volunteering time, holding a food drive, or donating money or food.

After serving lunch to more than 100 people Monday at the Salvation Army, Lynn Bauder of Lansing said it's a privilege to volunteer. She has volunteered at the soup kitchen for 10 years.

"It's a gift of God's to be able to volunteer," she said. "You get so much out of it, you almost feel selfish."

Contact Melissa Domsic at 377-1061 or mdomsic@lsj.com.



Church to give away food

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

By George Jaksa

gjaksa@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6332

FLINT- Food will be given away 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursday or while supplies last at Central Assembly Pentecostal Church of God, 2014 Zimmerman St.

The program is sponsored by the church and Crossover, Downtown Outreach Ministries.

- George Jaksa

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Utility aid ahead for poor, seniors

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

By Jim Harger

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Customers of Grand Rapids' water and sewer systems who fall behind on their bills may get some relief next year.

Meanwhile, the rest of the system's 67,000 customers can expect an average increase of about 4 percent, according to rates proposed by the system's Utility Advisory Board.

The "circuit breaker" for individual customers is a new program aimed at helping elderly and poor customers who fall behind, said Beth Troyer, customer service administrator for the city's Water Department.

Troyer said it is not clear how many customers will be able to take advantage of the program. The program will start with a fund of about \$116,424.

Who will administer the fund and how customers will qualify has not been decided, Troyer said. The fund probably will be administered through the Area Community Services Employment and Training Council, she said.

Last year, the Kent County Emergency Needs Task Force reported spending \$97,000 countywide to help 681 households that fell behind on water and sewer payments. Those payments included households outside the Grand Rapids system, she said.

In the city of Grand Rapids, tax liens were placed on 1,028 parcels with delinquent water and sewer bills, she said. Some of those also may qualify for the fund.

For customers able to pay their bills, the rate increases will vary.

Customers who live in Gaines Township and the North Kent Sewer Authority will face increases of 19.48 percent on their sewer bills. That's because they fall under an old rate-setting mechanism based mainly on sewage flows, said Mike Wolski, the system's financial officer.

The North Kent Sewer Authority has refused to adopt the system's new rate mechanisms. It is building a new sewage treatment plant that will go online in late 2008.

Customers in Grand Rapids and Walker will see their sewer rates go up 5.97 percent and 6.82 percent, respectively. That's mainly because of repairs to the system's Market Avenue Pumping Station and construction at the Indian Mill Creek area.

Water customers in Kentwood, Cascade Township and Ottawa County will see a slight drop in rates, mainly as a result of increased volume that allows them to spread the system's fixed costs, Wolski said.

The new rates, which must be approved by each of the system's customer communities, include "circuit breaker" and "rate smoothing" measures to let communities to spread one-time rate increases over several years, Deputy City Manager Eric DeLong said.

Send e-mail to the author: jharger@grpress.com

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[Back](#)

Article published Nov 13, 2006

Walk fuels effort to beat high heating bills

It's a pretty basic equation - high utility bills and low income can create a gap that leaves people cold.

Eight-year-old Gabriel Hamad understood it well.

"We're trying to help people get money for people who have no heat," he explained as he trod the sidewalk near Monroe City Hall on a chilly afternoon. Gabriel was among dozens of people concerned about the plight of the needy who were walking the talk Sunday as part of the 16th annual Walk for Warmth sponsored by the Monroe County Opportunity Program (MCOP), a community action agency.

He and his sister, Layla, 4, and mom, Terri, were among the first groups of walkers to follow a 2-mile route through downtown to strike a blow against the cold. The Hamad family figured they raise about \$100 for the effort.

That should translate into \$200, explained Stephanie Zorn Kasprzak, MCOP executive director, because each dollar donated is matched by a contribution from the Michigan Community Action Agency Association.

Last year the effort raised \$4,335 and this year's event was expected to exceed that. Just as important is the timing of the effort. "The glory of this is that all of our grants to pay utility bills run from January through September," Ms. Kasprzak said. "This bridges the gap for us. It'll get us through till January."

Also, the money raised can be used to help anyone who has need, not just those who meet strict limited-income guidelines. "We don't have a lot of eligibility requirements for this money because it's not grant-funded," she said.

The agency did a needs assessment last year and found that utility assistance was ranked No. 1 in Monroe County.

That's not news to Lisa Millyard, a protective services worker at the Monroe office of the Department of Human Services who was among those walking. "This is important to me," she said. "We have a large population of needy in the community." The latest Census figures show that about 10 percent of the county population, or about 15,176 people live in poverty.

Ms. Millyard said the DHS office has a limited amount for heating assistance and uses it to help those who can't find help anywhere else. The MCOP fundraiser and other community-based programs help stretch the resources. In terms of utility bills, "last year was not a good year," she said. "There was a lot of demand."

Scott and Mary Jo Kinkead of Monroe were escorting their nieces, Clarissa and Caitlyn Stowers, who got pledges of \$68 from fellow students at Custer I Elementary School. It was the first time they've been involved and they felt good about helping the community. The Kinkeads made pledges of their own.

Tessa Zorn, 9, and her sister, Madylin, 7, launched a sophisticated fundraising drive at Christiancy Elementary School. "Team Tessa" raised \$322 in pledges "for the homeless who don't have heat," Tessa explained. She even had fashioned a Team Tessa t-shirt to wear, made posters for her class, and proudly announced that she raised about \$204 of the Team Tessa amount herself. The kids are the daughters of Tim and Suzanne Zorn.

Walk for Warmth sets disbursement guidelines

SAULT STE. MARIE - The Chippewa County Walk for Warmth "Oversight Committee" met to establish the disbursement guidelines for this year's funds. To date, the Walk for Warmth has raised more than \$20,000 with which to provide emergency assistance to residents for home heating and other related needs.

The funds will be available beginning on Dec. 1, after the group has had an opportunity to get the program organized for state matching funds purposes. In the meantime, households experiencing emergency needs should start by contacting the local Department of Human Services. After that date, applications for the local Walk for Warmth assistance can be completed at the Community Action Agency in the Avery Center, according to a news release.

The following general guidelines will apply:

- This program is designed as a last resort for assistance when all other sources of assistance and/or programs cannot be accessed due to lack of funds or eligibility requirements that cannot be met by the applicant.
- A "Decision Notice" is required from other sources of assistance documenting that the household is not eligible for assistance at that time, or funding assistance is not available. In some cases, this can be determined through direct contact (telephone/fax) with the other assistance providers.
- Income - Any household facing an emergency is welcome to apply, providing they meet all other program guidelines.
- The household receiving assistance will be encouraged to, at the very least, participate in the Walk for Warmth as a walker, and solicit pledges, for the following year's Walk for Warmth.
- Households may apply for assistance more than one time. However, those who have not been helped before will receive priority.

Racial data show some gaps growing

Divide persists in income, education

BY STEPHEN OHLEMACHER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

November 14, 2006

WASHINGTON -- Decades after the civil rights movement, racial disparities in income, education and home ownership persist and, by some measurements, are growing.

White households had incomes that were two-thirds higher than blacks and 40% higher than Hispanics last year, according to data to be released today by the U.S. Census Bureau.

White adults were also more likely than black and Hispanic adults to have college degrees and to own their own homes. They were less likely to live in poverty.

Three-fourths of white households owned their homes in 2005, compared with 46% of black households and 48% of Hispanic households. Home ownership is near an all-time high in the United States, but racial gaps have increased in the past 25 years.

Asian Americans, on average, have higher incomes and education levels than whites. However, they have higher poverty rates and lower home ownership rates.

Today the Census Bureau will release 2005 racial data on incomes, education levels, home ownership rates and poverty rates.

Among the findings:

- Black adults have narrowed the gap with white adults in earning high school diplomas, but the gap has widened for college degrees. Thirty percent of white adults had at least a bachelor's degree in 2005, while 17% of black adults and 12% of Hispanic adults had degrees. Forty-nine percent of Asian Americans had at least a bachelor's degree.
- The median income for white households was \$50,622 last year. It was \$30,939 for black households, \$36,278 for Hispanic households and \$60,367 for Asian households.
- The gap in poverty rates has narrowed since 1980, but it remains substantial. The poverty rate for white residents was 8.3%. It was 24.9% for black residents, 21.8% for Hispanic residents and 11.1% for Asian American residents.

Thomas Shapiro, professor of law and social policy at Brandeis University, said the easiest answer to narrowing racial gaps is to promote home ownership, which would help minority families accumulate wealth.

"The wealth gap is not just a story of merit and achievement, it's also a story of the historical legacy of race in the United States," said Shapiro, author of "The Hidden Cost of Being African American."

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